Mass.Gov Week 2: User information gathering

There are a variety of ways you can go about finding out who your users are:

Surveys: You can include open-ended questions to gather demographic data and data about who your visitors are (e.g. teachers, researchers, media, etc.), why they come to your site, and what they want to accomplish.

Market Research: MISER publishes a wealth of census data that can be very useful in finding out more about the demographics of your users.

Email, phone calls, letters, and other contacts with the public: Find out the top requests coming into your agency by phone, email, and in-person service centers. If you have a central agency phone number (like a 1-800 number), get regular reports from the operators to find out what your audience is asking for and who they are. Talk with your target audiences regularly. Reach out to your target audiences at conferences, trade shows, and other events.

Input from other web content managers: You can compare what common audience groups (e.g. media, teachers, kids, seniors) are requesting from other agencies. This may help you develop the same kind of content from your agency and compliment what other agencies are doing.

Analyze search statistics: Find out the terms your visitors are typing into your search engine. Make sure the terms they use are the same terms and labels you're using on your site. And make sure the most requested items are easily accessible from your homepage.

Analyze your web logs: Find out what pages are being accessed most often on your site; you'll want to be sure to make thos pages easy to find from your home page.

Focus groups: Although participant numbers may be small, you can learn about what some typical visitors think about your site. [more on focus groups in week 3]

Usability testing: Although participant numbers are typically small, you can include open-ended questions during testing to gather demographic info and general impressions about your website. [more on usability testing in week 4]